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ABSTRACT

This paper outlines the structures of four career-oriented programs in speech communication at James Madison University, Harrisonburg, Virginia. These programs were developed to serve the student (by addressing career needs and ambitions), the advisor (by helping students to select careers), and faculty member (by relating specific courses to the general curriculum and by eliminating overlap and duplication). Curricula are designed for careers in community service, business communication, general communication studies, and professional speech-communication education. Program curriculum guides, with lists of the careers to which they apply, are included. (RL)

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Career Oriented Programs in Speech Communication

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CAREER ORIENTED PROGRAMS IN SPEECH COMMUNICATION

Career education and the increasing call for career accountability are challenging the traditional academic curriculum of higher education. No academic discipline can afford to sit complacently expecting society to recognize intuitively and accept unquestioningly its worth as an academic pursuit. Enrollment trends on many college and university campuses seem to demonstrate that students want to know what good their education is going to be to them after graduation. Students are intent upon their future and are no longer satisfied with platitudes that contented some a few decades ago. Students, facing grim prospects in a very tight job market, are concerned that their time and money invested in education will yield a net gain. As educational costs increase the pressure to demonstrate positive results increases.[1]

However, few critics of higher education advocate the wholesale elimination of any body of knowledge or area of academic study simply because its relevancy or practical applicability seems questionable. The issue is not that selected disciplines or areas of scholarship are superfluous, but that some scholars who are principally involved in seemingly irrelevant pursuits have failed to define the role and purpose of their discipline in the contemporary world. Instead, they have continued to insist that knowledge for the sake of knowledge is good and therefore their subject areas are justified.[2] However, zero-based budgeting and closer scrutiny

of credit hour production have seriously threatened the status and security of many non-pragmatic, purely academic, disciplines in the university. It seems that, for at least the present, areas of academic scholarship will have to address the issue of practical applicability to enjoy continued support. Those paying the bills, especially in higher education, are demanding to know what they are paying for.[3] Scholars who fail to respond adequately may eventually find themselves without support, without students, and perhaps ultimately without the "ivory tower."[4]

Some members of the speech communication discipline have begun to address more extensively the issue of career orientation and relevancy.[5] Increased awareness of and interest in the question of speech communication career applicability is demonstrated by convention programs discussing the issue being sponsored at both the state and regional levels. In addition, the November 1976 issue of Communication Education contains a series of articles addressing the problem of career education in speech communication instruction.[6] The McBath-Burhans report, Communication Education for Careers, is a study of significant value because the authors "...attempted to assess career potentials of communication education, to identify factors that inhibit and promote such education, and to suggest strategies for career planning in our field."[7]

The Speech Communication Area of the Department of Communication Arts at James Madison University has attempted to answer the question, "What can a student do with an undergraduate degree in

speech communication?" The procedure used to develop a solution was drawn from the McBath-Burhans report:

> ...speech communication departments interested in assuming a career-oriented posture should (1) identify career areas for which a speech communication education should provide an excellent background, (2) develop a number of non-academic career-oriented communication tracks within the speech communication major, and (3) include as part of each track a list of recommended (or, in some cases, required) courses from both speech communication and other departments which will improve students' preparation in each of the identified career areas.[8]

Initially, a review of the speech communication faculty and resources was made and compared with the role and scope of James Madison University and with the interests and capabilities of the student body. This review and comparison made it possible to define some specific alternative goals that would be compatible with the institution, the faculty and resources, and the student body. Recognizing that it is unrealistic to attempt to be a comprehensive program, trying to be all things to all people, four specific career areas or career oriented programs were identified. The four "career oriented programs," or COPs, are identified by the titles: COP I, Community Service; COP II, Business Communication; COP III, General Communication Studies; and COP IV, Professional Speech Communication Education. The COPs are designed to accomplish several

objectives. First, the COPs answer the question, "What can be done with an undergraduate degree in speech communication from James Madison University?" Students can select a COP that addresses their career needs and ambitions while not restricting unduly their alternatives. Second, the COPs function as an advising tool which helps the student face the task of selecting a career. Third, the COP program enables the professional faculty to understand the significance of each course in the curriculum, and fourth, the COP curriculum helps focus the purpose of each course and eliminate overlap and duplication. It does not, however, place a maximum limit on the academic scope of any individual course. Because the COPs operationally define the curriculum, both students and faculty, are able to perceive the relationship between independent elements of the curriculum and are made sensitive to the goals and objectives of the complete program.

Before presenting the COP curriculum it is useful to explain the stucture of each of the COP curriculum programs. COP I and II, Community Service and Business Communication, begin with brief statements that specify the COP's career orientation and list some selected representative careers. The COP's initial statement and list of selected careers is designed to help the student understand the focus of the COPs and the kinds of career options being addressed. The curriculum of COP I and COP II is divided into two sections. The first section focuses on specific communication competencies needed to enter careers in Community Service or in Business

Communication. The specific communication competencies identified are representative of the most salient skills necessary, and it is understood that many other competencies are also developed. For each of the competencies there are specific courses identified to accomplish that competency. The second curriculum section contains a list of recommended auxiliary courses. The auxiliary courses, most outside the speech communication area, are included because they will improve the students' preparation for the identified career area.

COP III, General Communication Studies, is a general track or curriculum with broad applicability but limited career focus because of its liberal arts orientation.

COP IV, Professional Speech Communication Education, is specifically designed for the student seeking a career of secondary school teaching. Since teacher certification is rigidly controlled in Virginia, little innovation is available in this program. No list of representative careers is presented and the curriculum is principally designed to satisfy certification requirements. It should also be noted that COP IV is a minor program while COPs I, II, and III are major programs.

Notes

[1]See, for example, Arthur M. Cohen, "Humanizing the Curriculum," Change, 9, No. 6 (1977), 48-49.

[2]The pros and cons of this issue are ably discussed in William J. Bouwsma, "Blurred Vision," Change, 9, No. 6 (1977), 60.

[3]Cohen, p. 48.

[4]See, for example, Jane Work, "Out of the Ivory Tower and Into the Marketplace," Communication Education, 25 (1976), 317-19.

[5]See, for example, Wallace A. Bacon, "Higher Education and Speech Communication," The Southern Speech Communication Journal, 43 (1977), 9-15.

[6]Kenneth L. Brown, ed., Communication Education, 25 (1976).

[7]James H. McBath and David T. Burhans, Jr., Communication Education for Careers (Falls Church, Virginia: Speech Communication Association, 1975), p. ix.

[8]McBath and Burhans, p. 80.

COP I
COMMUNITY SERVICE

This career oriented program is designed for the student who may aspire to a position of leadership in a service-directed agency or activity. COP I is intended for thoses students who seek broadly based communication skills for success in non-profit organizations.

SOME REPRESENTATIVE CAREERS

College/University Admissions Officer
Student Relations Counselor
Civil Service Worker
Speechwriter
Religious Worker
Social Service Worker
Director of Volunteer Services
Intervention Worker
Arbitrator
Marriage Counselor
Social Welfare Worker
Public Information Officer
Ombudsman

COMPETENCIES AND COURSES TO ACHIEVE COMPETENCIES:

Upon satisfactory completion of COP I, the student will be competent to:

plan, organize, and evaluate small group communication.
(COMM 227, Problem Solving Communication)
(COMM 427, Advanced Studies in Group Communication)

plan and lead conferences.
(COMM 329, Business and Professional Speech Communication)

plan, conduct, and evaluate fund raising and social action campaigns.
(COMM 326, Persuasion)

prepare and present oral reports.
(COMM 329, Business and Professional Speech Communication)

write publicity and press releases for mass media.
(COMM 281, News Writing)

plan, conduct, and evaluate interviews.
(COMM 329, Business and Professional Speech Communication)

engage in creative and critical decision making.
(COMM 427, Advanced Studies in Group Communication)

resolve misunderstandings, deal with complaints, and expedite communication.
(COMM 305, Communication Codes)

understand and implement theories of attitude change.
(COMM 326, Persuasion)

identify and evaluate organizational structures and recommend planned changes.
(COMM 330, Organizational Communication)

write letters, memos, reports, etc.
(BEOA 330, Business Communications)

compose speeches.
(COMM 211, Basic Forensics Performance)
(COMM 225, Argumentation and Debate)
(COMM 326, Persuasion)
(COMM 329, Business and Professional Speech Communication)

RECOMMENDED AUXILIARY COURSES

The following recommended courses will develop competencies which are valuable to communication professionals in service-directed agencies or activities.

SOCI 340, Individual and Social Organization
SOCI 336, Sociology of Prejudice and Discrimination
SOSW 287, Introduction to Social Work
SOSW 335, Policy Development in Human Services
COMM 280, Practicum--Journalism (Press Release)

COP II
BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

This career oriented program is designed for the student who may aspire to an executive or managerial position in business, industry, or a profession. While not strictly a management training program, COP II is rather intended for the student who seeks more broadly based communication skills for administrative success in the profit-motivated sector.

SOME REPRESENTATIVE CAREERS:

Personnel Manager
Insurance Agent
Marketing Researcher
Sales Representative
Communication Consultant
Managerial Trainer
Advertising Executive
Merchandiser
Public Relations Officer
Labor Relations Negotiator
Organizational Consultant
Publicity Director

COMPETENCIES AND COURSES TO ACHIEVE COMPETENCIES:

Upon satisfactory completion of COP II, the student will be competent to:

analyze and evaluate group dynamics and function as a group leader.
(COMM 227, Problem Solving Communication)
(COMM 427, Advanced Studies in Group Communication)

plan, conduct, and evaluate conferences.
(COMM 329, Business and Professional Speech Communication)

understand and implement theories of persuasion and attitude change.
(COMM 326, Persuasion)

compose speeches.
(COMM 211, Basic Forensics Performance)
(COMM 225, Argumentation and Debate)
(COMM 326, Persuasion)
(COMM 329, Business and Professional Speech Communication)

plan, conduct and evaluate interviews.
(COMM 329, Business and Professional Speech Communication)

identify and evaluate organizational structures and recommend planned changes.
(COMM 330, Organizational Communication)

plan and evaluate basic advertising.
(COMM 326, Persuasion)

write publicity and press releases for mass media.
(COMM 281, News Writing)

prepare and present oral reports.
(COMM 329, Business and Professional Speech Communication)

write letters, memos, reports, etc.
(BEOA 330, Business Communications)

engage in creative and critical decision-making.
(COMM 427, Advanced Studies in Group Communication)

utilize a variety of communication technologies, including teletype, telephone systems, satellite systems, computer systems, closed-circuit television systems, and other technologies.
(COMM 500, Seminar in Communication (Communication Technologies)

RECOMMENDED AUXILIARY COURSES

The following recommended courses will develop competencies which are valuable to communication professionals in business, industry, or a profession.

ACTG 241, Elementary Accounting
MGT 300, Principles of Management
BEOA 131, Elementary Typewriting
BEOA 234, Office Procedures
COMM 280, Practicum--Journalism (Press Release)

COP III
GENERAL COMMUNICATION STUDIES

This career oriented program is primarily designed for the student who desires a broad education in speech communication. While it is not intended as a program which focuses upon a specific career field it does provide the student with knowledge and skill widely applicable in society. COP III is also designed to complement major programs in other social sciences and humanities, such as psychology, sociology, social work, English, history, and political science. Further, COP III will provide the student with skills which will facilitate admission to graduate or professional school and may enhance the student's opportunity for graduate school financial assistance.

RECOMMENDED AREAS OF STUDY:

Upon satisfactory completion of COP III the student will have studied in depth from the following areas:

history of rhetoric and oratory.
(COMM 335, Free Speech in America)
(COMM 421, Rhetorical Theory and Criticism)
(COMM 422, Contemporary Rhetoric)

rhetorical theory and criticism.
(COMM 421, Rhetorical Theory and Criticism)
(COMM 422, Contemporary Rhetoric)

research methodology.
(COMM 303b, Research Methodologies in Communication)
(COMM 421, Rhetorical Theory and Criticism)

theories of persuasion and attitude change.
(COMM 326, Persuasion)

communication theory.
(COMM 210, The Process of Human Communication)
(COMM 305, Communication Codes)
(COMM 326, Persuasion)

small group communication theory.
(COMM 227, Problem Solving Communication)
(COMM 427, Advanced Studies in Group Communication)

interpersonal communication theory.
(COMM 305, Communication Codes)

public speaking and oral interpretation.
(COMM 211, Basic Forensics Performance)

argumentation and debate.
(COMM 225, Argumentation and Debate)

organizational communication theories.
(COMM 330, Organizational Communication)

COP IV
PROFESSIONAL SPEECH COMMUNICATION EDUCATION

This career oriented program is designed for the student who may aspire to the profession of secondary school teaching. This program has been developed as a minor rather than as a major because present Virginia certification standards and curriculum policies preclude a primary concentration in speech communication education.

RECOMMENDED COURSES:

Upon satisfactory completion of COP IV, the student will have completed the following courses:

COMM 222, Public Speaking

COMM 227, Problem Solving Communication

COMM 211, Basic Forensics Performance

COMM 225, Argumentation and Debate

COMM 210, The Process of Human Communication

COMM 305, Communication Codes -or- COMM 326, Persuasion